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THE

HALLOWEEN

GAME

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THE HALLOWEEN GAME

by R.L. STINE

A PARACHUTE PRESS BOOK

A Special Goosebumps Mini-Book
created for Hershey's

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My friends Krista and Carl and I are twelve. That's a little old for trick-or-treating. But we decided to go out anyway. I mean, you're *never* too old for a bag full of candy—right?

I wore a chimpanzee costume. Krista was a fairy princess, with silvery wings and a silver tiara on her head. Carl wore an old skeleton costume that was falling apart.

Wouldn't you know it? The first house we stopped at belonged to Miles, a strange kid who goes to our school. Miles lives in a creepy old mansion that looks like a movie haunted house.

He greeted us at the door. He wasn't wearing a costume. Miles didn't need to. He looked weird enough without a Halloween costume!

"Please come in," Miles said. "Would you like to play a Halloween game?"

I saw a bunch of other kids in costumes in Miles's house. "Let's play," one of them said.

"We're too old to trick-or-treat," another kid chimed in. "Let's play the game instead."

Krista and Carl said they wanted to play too. So I went along with them.

Miles led us all to his front yard to explain the rules. He pointed down the street. "My Aunt Freeda's house is three blocks away," he said. "Her house looks exactly like mine."

I stared up at the old mansion. It gave me the creeps just to look at it. Why did someone build another house just like it?

Miles explained the rules of the game. "Aunt Freeda has hidden Halloween candy all over her house," he said. "You have to find her house, go inside, and collect as much candy as you can. Then you must hurry back to my house. You have exactly half an hour. The one who comes

back with the most candy wins."

The other kids cheered excitedly. They were all eager to play.

Krista, Carl, and I decided to play the game too. Searching for candy in a creepy old house sounded like fun.

We had no idea how horrifying it would turn out to be.

We walked together toward Aunt Freeda's house. It was a clear, cool night.

Krista fluttered her fairy princess wings and pretended to fly down the sidewalk. Carl gave an evil laugh to a group of little trick-or-treaters.

We were halfway down the block when I saw a black shadow slither across

the front of a house.

I stopped and stared into the dark front yard. I wanted to see what had made that shadow.

Krista and Carl stopped beside me. "Was that a dog?" Carl whispered through his skeleton mask.

"It was too big to be a dog," I said.

We started to walk on—when a creature leaped toward us from the hedge. I saw red eyes. And heard a terrifying growl.

The three of us stared in horror at a panther! A black panther!

I spun around—and started to run down the street.

My two friends ran with me. Our

shoes thudded loudly on the pavement.

My chest pounded so hard, I could barely breathe. I turned back—and saw the snarling creature loping after us.

The beast is taking its time, I realized. It *knows* it's going to get us!

Without a word, all three of us began running faster, tearing down the street, screaming for help.

We didn't escape. Carl fell. He tripped over a stone in the street, landed hard on his side, and skidded over the pavement.

"Owwwww!" He tossed back his head in a howl of pain. "My arm—I broke it! I broke it!" he wailed.

I glanced back to see the panther's red eyes flash with excitement. It lowered its

head and came at us.

“Carl—run!” I cried. I tried to pull him up. But he was too heavy.

“My arm,” he moaned, holding it tenderly. “My arm ...”

Krista and I had no choice. We took off. We ran into the nearest yard. And leaped for a tree with low limbs. Gasping for breath, we both struggled up the tree, hoping, praying the panther couldn’t follow us up.

We were clinging to a middle limb when we heard the panther’s ugly roar. Then, Carl’s shrill scream made us both gasp. Krista covered her ears. I trembled so hard, I nearly fell out of the tree.

Then—silence. A terrifying silence.

“It—it got Carl,” Krista whispered sadly.

I didn’t reply. I couldn’t speak.

We waited a long while. Then we climbed down from the tree. I knew we should try to find Carl. I knew we should try to get help.

But something made me want to continue the Halloween game. I can’t explain it. But something was forcing Krista and me to continue on our way to Miles’s aunt’s house.

A short while later, we arrived at the block where Miles had sent us. The street lights were all out. A cold wind greeted us as we stepped into the darkness. Blown by the wind, an empty garbage can rattled

past us down the street.

“Whoa! Check it out, Krista!” I cried, pointing.

Krista’s eyes went wide with surprise. *All* of the houses on the block were identical to Miles’s creepy old mansion. Every house appeared exactly the same!

“This is totally weird,” Krista said. “How do we know which house is Aunt Freeda’s?”

“I guess we have to check them out one by one,” I told her.

We started up the dirt driveway to the first house. I glanced around, but I didn’t see any other kids.

We were nearly to the front door when I saw a burst of fire from the back of the

house. It shot out to the driveway—bright orange and yellow—then pulled back.

“Whoa. Stop!” I told Krista. I put out a hand to stop her. We both stared toward the back.

Another orange burst of flame.

“Is the garage on fire?” Krista asked.

I didn’t have a chance to answer. I heard heavy, thundering footsteps. And then a shrill roar.

Krista and I both gasped as another burst of fire lit up the yard. And in the flash of orange light, we saw what caused the fire.

A dragon!

An enormous dragon, nearly as tall as the house—its head raised on its long,

arching neck. Spouting flames from its open mouth and nostrils.

“No—!” I uttered a muffled cry and stumbled backwards.

“This is unbelievable!” Krista shrieked. The next burst of flame captured the terror on her face. “Unbelievable!”

“It’s unbelievable—but it’s here!” I cried.

We stared at the amazing creature. Stared as if hypnotized. Stared a little too long.

When we finally turned to run, it was too late.

I heard a sickening *crunch* as the dragon’s heavy jaws closed around Krista’s

princess wings.

Her wings fell off. She shrieked in fear. Her arms and legs thrashed the air as the giant beast hoisted her up.

Breathing fire through its gaping nostrils, the dragon clamped its jaws on Krista’s costume. Its heavy feet thudded the ground as it started to carry her away.

“Help me! Hellllp!” Krista wailed.

My heart stopped. How could I help her? How?

And then something glittered at the base of a dark tree trunk. I dove for it. A sword. A heavy metal sword, probably from someone’s Halloween costume.

I grabbed it up. Without stopping to think about it, I charged the dragon.

“Helllllp me!” Krista wailed. She kicked her legs and squirmed. But the dragon’s jaws held her tightly as it thundered away.

“I’m coming!” I cried to Krista.

I raised the sword high. I dove for the horrible dragon.

With a gasp, I plunged the metal blade into the creature’s broad back.

The blade cracked. The sword handle shattered and fell from my hand. The blade and the handle toppled to the grass.

“Ohhhh.” I uttered a sigh of defeat as I stood and watched helplessly. Watched as the dragon lumbered away with Krista in its jaws.

A few seconds later, I was alone. I

spun around, my eyes searching the dark houses. My two friends were gone. What should I do?

To my surprise, the door to the next house swung open. As if inviting me in. I hurried across the lawn to the house. I was eager to continue the game. I don’t know why. It was almost as if I had no choice.

I stepped into the front hallway. No lights. The entire house stood in darkness.

Costumed kids moved as if they were shadows. I could see them searching the living room, bending to pick up candy.

The rooms downstairs were too crowded, I decided. Gripping the wooden banister tightly, I made my way slowly up

the creaking staircase.

I stepped into a dark bedroom. I clicked the light switch, but no light came on. In the dim light, I saw a candy bar on the dresser. I picked it up and dropped it in my trick-or-treat bag.

I found another candy bar on the bed. Another on the bed table. I dropped them into my bag.

I was about to leave the room when I realized I wasn't alone. I gasped as a hideous creature slipped up beside me.

A grinning ghoul! It hovered over me, its green skin glowing in the darkness. It had three yellow eyes and a grinning mouth filled with rows of jagged teeth.

"Let me out of here!" I cried.

But now there were three ugly ghouls. And then there were six. All grinning. All glowing. Circling me. Six hideous ghouls circling me, leaping in the air. Holding me prisoner.

Wh-what did they plan to do to me? I didn't want to find out. "Let me out!" I screamed.

And then I froze. I couldn't move. Couldn't breathe.

The ghouls froze too. Some of them were in midair.

All of us in that dark room—we all froze in place. We all stood still as a picture.

What is happening? I wondered. *What is happening to me?*

In the office on the twentieth floor, four men in dark business suits huddled around a computer. They stared at the picture frozen on the screen.

A young man with an earring in one ear, blond hair pulled back in a ponytail, smiled at the businessmen. "So what do you think of the game?" he asked. "Lots of action, huh? Do you like the graphics? I think the dragon and panther are really good. This is the 64-bit version. But we're adapting it for CD-ROM."

One of the businessmen scratched his chin. "I think it's funny that you named the three kids Robby, Krista, and Carl, after my kids," he said. "I know they'd

get a kick out of that."

He shook his head. "But I'm sorry," he continued. "I don't think our company is interested in buying your Halloween computer game."

The young man sighed in disappointment. "Why not?" he asked.

"Kids won't like it," the businessman replied. "It's not scary enough."

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